



Harmony Valley Farm

An update for our Community Supported Agriculture Members - Since 1993

October 31-November 1, 2014

The Future of Food Series, Part VI: Carnivore's Dilemma

by Sarah Janes Ugoretz

In this most recent Future of Food article, Robert Kunzig—senior environmental editor for National Geographic—explores the *Carnivore's Dilemma* (or, as I would comically rephrase it: *How I Decided to Embrace the Feedlot System and Love Industrial Beef*). Kunzig's guiding question is one that asks whether it's ok for Americans to eat beef, given what we know about expected population growth, rising global demand for meat, the associated and/or potential environmental and health implications of industrial meat production and livestock's contributions to global warming. In attempting to arrive at a deeper understanding of this question, Kunzig spent one week in Texas amongst the cowboys, the nutritionists, the veterinarians and the higher-up executives of Cactus Feeders and its subsidiary, Wrangler Feedyard.

In Texas, the number of calves born each year outnumbers babies by a ratio of 10:1, while feedlots the size of Wrangler tend to ship, on average, one million head of cattle to slaughter. The existence of such industrial operations has secured the United States' place as the world's leader in both meat production and consumption. Last year, each American consumed an average of 54 pounds of beef, while only allocating 11 percent of their income towards food purchases (though I've come across numerous sources—notably, *The Economist*—that put this number closer to 6 percent). This is to say that we're able to eat a lot of meat, for not a lot of money. Indeed, that appears to have been the point. Paul Engler, CEO of Cactus Feeders, recounts how his father, who founded the business in 1975, envisioned a world where beef was cheap enough for all. Considering that in 2013, the U.S. produced the same amount of beef as in 1976 but did so by slaughtering 10 million fewer cattle, the elder Engler appears to have gotten his wish.

Efficiency is the commonly held goal amongst the Wranglers and the Cactus Feeders of the world. Cactus' creed says it all: "Conversion of Feed Energy Into the Maximum Production of Beef at the Lowest Possible Cost." Indeed, the consensus amongst those that Kunzig cites throughout the article confirms that this level of efficiency is paramount if the U.S. is to meet the rising demand for meat across the globe—a responsibility that Kunzig adopts from the article's onset. Unfortunately, there doesn't appear to be a place for anything *but* industrial production in this most humble of quests. Other types of systems appear unable to keep up with the amount of beef needed to satiate demand. Jason Clay, a food expert with World Wildlife Fund, confirms this suspicion, stating: "Feedlots are better than grass fed, no question." Clay insists that what we really need to do is intensify—to produce more with less.

When it comes to the question of emissions, industrial production systems come out on top again. Pointing to data collected

Final Peak Season Vegetable Share!

Beginning next week, November 6/7/8 all deliveries switch to every other week.

Autumn Vegetable and **Winter Fruit Shares** also begin next week.

Refer to your CSA Calendar for more information.

This Week's Box

ITALIAN GARLIC: Roast broccoli or cauliflower with minced garlic. Drizzle with olive oil and roast at 400 ° F for about 15 minutes. Squeeze fresh lemon juice on top before serving.

CARROTS: Slice carrots lengthwise and roast with cloves of garlic and slices of fresh ginger for a delicious side that will certainly warm you inside and out!

BROCCOLI OR CAULIFLOWER: Simply steam and lightly salt. Let the natural flavors shine through!

RUSSET POTATOES: Cut into thin slices and pan fry with butter and onions for home fries that will rival any greasy spoon! Allow to overcook a bit so that potatoes get crispy on the outside. Great for brunch!

SALAD MIX: Why not make your own dressing with some of this week's box items? Try a carrot ginger vinaigrette made with pureed carrots, fresh ginger, onions, vinegar, oil and seasonings as seen at www.saveur.com for a delicate flavor to complement your salad greens.

SPINACH: Make a fall spinach salad with sliced onions, chunks of apple and toasted nuts. Top with the Sweet Potato Vinaigrette recipe that was featured in our newsletter from October 16-18, 2014.

YELLOW ONIONS: A batch of caramelized onion scones would be the perfect savory accompaniment to a bowl of your favorite hearty fall stew.

SWEET POTATOES: Toss sweet potato wedges in olive oil, cumin and chili powder and roast for sweet potato fries with a kick! Serve with spicy mayo. Store sweet potatoes in a cool, dry location. Optimal storage temperature is 55-65°F.

LACINATO KALE: For the perfect fall side, make a sauté of onions, apples and kale with a pinch of curry powder.

BRUSSELS SPROUTS: Bring out the natural sweetness of Brussels sprouts by tossing with olive oil and roasting quickly at high heat. Top with toasted hazelnuts.

RED MUSTARD: Mustard greens have a mild peppery flavor with a slight sweetness in the fall. Wilt greens in boiling water. Drain and squeeze dry. Sauté lightly in garlic butter and salt and pepper to taste.

FRESH BABY GINGER: See our vegetable feature for some great ideas for using fresh baby ginger. What a treat!

by scientists with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Kunzig explains that cows allowed to graze on pasture produce twice as much methane as their commercially raised counterparts. With more time to belch, expel waste and gain weight, these cows appear to do little more than contribute to global warming. In terms of livestock-related emissions in general, however, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) suggests that we needn't be very worried. At present, beef production accounts for 6 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions. If the world were to abstain from beef entirely, we'd see a reduction in emissions of less than 6 percent. This is because the fertilizer and fossil fuels used in producing and shipping grain would continue to contribute to emissions, since farmers would keep growing grain. But what if Americans in particular ate less beef? Would there then be more grain with which to "feed the world?" The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) used an economic model of the world food system to ask this question and found

that, apart from minor benefits, the impact on global food security would be minimal at best. Basically, if Americans were to eat less beef, American farmers would be less likely to export wheat and rice—two staples in the global food chain—to Asia and Africa.

At this point, it appears that Kunzig's question—can Americans keep eating beef?—has a favorable answer. However, we've now reached the topic of sustainability. If feedlots are the model through which we're to feed ourselves as well as the rest of the world, we must ask how sustainable they are. Kunzig states that this question is too complex to really address in this space, which I think speaks to the major limitations of this piece in general. He does take the time to mention concerns about antibiotic use in feedlots and their possible connection to the development of antibiotic resistance in humans. The environment gets a few sentences, mainly relating to the unclear effects the excretion of antibiotics might have on the environment, and the very real possibility that grain production

might succeed in exhausting the Ogallala aquifer by the end of the 21st century.

When all is said and done, however, Kunzig's conclusion is basically this: "Here's the inconvenient truth: Feedlots, with their troubling use of pharmaceuticals, save land and lower greenhouse gas emissions." What Kunzig doesn't say in this space says quite a lot. He breezes over the issue of ethics and animal welfare when it comes to beef production, and his discussion of the local environmental impacts of feedlots is virtually non-existent. What strikes me most, however, is that despite discussing in detail the various cocktails of hormones, steroids and antibiotics required to keep feedlot cows healthy and able to digest a diet that they're unable to process naturally, Kunzig doesn't discuss the superficiality that has become inherent in this type of system. If feedlots are, as this article suggests, the way to ensure that the world gets its meat, then these questions cannot be so quickly overlooked. Kunzig expresses his wish that Americans would stop "reducing complex social problems...to morality tales populated by heroes and villains." While I agree that too often food system discussions devolve into this "easy way out" conclusion, Kunzig seems to paint a picture that, to people who are concerned with and widely read on this issue, does not give equal weight to all of the major concerns.

I encourage you to sit down with this article and consider your own reactions, but for now, I'll leave you with mine. In their current state, feedlot systems strike me as far from sustainable. In order to keep pace with global demand, production would need to be scaled way up, which, to put it mildly, concerns me. Alternative production systems are only mentioned in detail towards the end of the article—and briefly, at that—and yet there is great potential in smaller scale grass-based systems, like what we at Harmony Valley are committed to, and in management intensive grazing systems. These models are almost certainly accompanied by an ecological component, in which the environment and the animals themselves are afforded a considerable degree of consideration. While reading this article, I couldn't help but think of Black Earth Meats, a nearby slaughterhouse that is humane-handling certified and that works with farmers committed to such alternative systems. The contrast between their creed and Cactus Feeders', which I stated earlier, could not be more stark: "We Honor These Animals, for By Their Death, We Gain Life." Efficiency is still a concern—after all, everyone needs to make a living. The difference here is that it's obviously not the be-all end-all goal. I think it is a mistake to conclude that industrial feedlot systems are the only way in which to meet global demand for meat, and I would go as far as to say that attempting to do so would be a deeply regrettable and environmentally costly mistake. You can read the full article online at www.food.nationalgeographic.com.

Feature: Fresh Baby Ginger

By Andrea Yoder

Ginger is a very interesting and unique crop, unlike anything else we grow on the farm. It is actually a rhizome, which is a stem that grows horizontally underground. It produces roots to anchor it and sends up shoots to grow into foliage above ground as it grows and expands. We grow the plant in one of our greenhouses that has a dirt floor. Ginger grows best in an ideal soil temperature of about 65°F, so trapping heat within the greenhouse helps us provide a longer period of warmth so we can maximize growth. Given our shorter growing season, we will never reach a full-sized ginger, so our ginger is actually "Baby Ginger."

Ginger is used as both medicine and food. As a medicine, it is said to have an anti-inflammatory effect and can soothe a whole host of gastrointestinal maladies. It can also be an effective pain reliever and part of a treatment plan for cancer. It is a common ingredient in many Asian cultures, often pairing with garlic and scallions in Chinese stir-frys or combine it with chiles, lemongrass and a variety of other ingredients to make Thai curry pastes. Ginger has a spicy, warm flavor which also makes it an excellent ingredient to pair with other spices and rich, comforting foods such as sweet potatoes, winter squash, mushrooms, broccoli, etc. It can be used extensively to make beverages, teas, baked goods, stir-frys, salad dressings, vegetable dishes, curries and much, much more!

Baby ginger has a very thin skin with pink to purple scales. You don't need to peel the thin, delicate skin of fresh, baby ginger. Simply trim away the scales and you are ready to use the ginger. You'll find baby ginger to be tender, juicy and very flavorful. Baby ginger is excellent to use for making pickled ginger. The leaves and stems also contain quite a bit of flavor. Use them to flavor soups or stocks or steep them in hot water to make tea. You could also use the ginger stems as a stirring stick for a tropical beverage. Fresh baby ginger can be stored at room temperature for several days. For longer storage, you can put it in the refrigerator or freezer.

We hope you have as much fun experimenting with and experiencing the delicious flavors of fresh ginger. We've had a lot of fun growing this crop for you!

Brussels Sprouts with Ginger & Cranberries

Recipe by Andrea Yoder

Serves 4

4 oz bacon, diced
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 heaping Tbsp fresh ginger, minced
1 small onion, small diced
3 cups Brussels sprouts, halved
Salt & Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
1 cup fresh cranberries, finely chopped

1. Heat a medium saute pan over medium heat. Once the pan is hot, add the bacon. Cook the bacon until it is just turning golden and is crispy. Remove the bacon pieces from the pan, put them in a bowl and set them aside. Pour the bacon grease out of the pan and into a glass jar. Reserve one tablespoon of the bacon grease.
2. Put 1 Tbsp of bacon grease back into the pan. Add garlic, ginger and onions and sauté 1-2 minutes or until the vegetables are fragrant and slightly sizzling.
3. Add the brussels sprouts and continue to sauté until the sprouts are tender and browned on the cut side. Remove from the heat and add the cooked bacon and cranberries.
4. Gently stir to combine all the ingredients. Season with salt and pepper.

Ginger Bug

"This is a marvelous fermented concoction that mixes well with a variety of syrups and juices to create carbonated drinks with added ginger flavor. It takes some tending and up to 10 days to really carbonate well, but the tending is very minor...easier than feeding the cat!" —Recipe and introduction by Eugenia Bone from her book *The Kitchen Ecosystem*.

Yield: 1 quart

1 quart water
1 Tbsp plus 10 tsps minced, unpeeled fresh ginger, divided
1 Tbsp plus 10 tsps unrefined cane sugar, divided

1. Place the water in a gallon jar, leaving about 2 inches of headroom at the top. Add 1 tablespoon each of the ginger and sugar, place a lid on the jar, screw on the band fingertip tight, and give it a good shake. Leave the jar out on your counter.
2. Every day for the next ten days, add 1 tsp ginger and 1 tsp sugar to the jar. This feeds the fermentation, increasing the amount of carbonation. When you give the jar a shake, you will see the bubbles along the top of the liquid, and if you open it, it may really bubble up..and out!
3. After 10 days, strain and pour the ginger bug into bottles and close them with a cap or cork and refrigerate. The ginger bug will hold for about 1 month.

NOTE: You can find additional information about Ginger Bug & how to use it at www.nourishedkitchen.com

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Baby Red Beets, 10 pounds - \$25
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Cross Plains, Mazo, Strathfield, Argyle and Local

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November 7th-8th.

Please drop your check in the mail the same day that you place your order.

Madison

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November 8th.

Please pay by cash or check when you pick up your produce at our market stand at the **Dane County Farmers' Market**.